



EARLY HEARING DETECTION AND INTERVENTION

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Hearing loss occurs in 12,000 babies each year (3 of every 1,000). Developmental delays can occur if hearing loss goes undetected. Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) is a national initiative that supports the early identification of infants with hearing loss. The initiative uses hearing screening; audiologic and medical evaluation; and enrollment in early intervention services when appropriate. The average age of identification of children with hearing loss is 1.5 to 3 years of age, without EHDI programs, which research suggests is already past the start of the critical period for optimal speech and language acquisition. Families and professionals can make sure the child receives intervention services at an early age if a child's hearing loss is identified soon after birth. EHDI promotes early treatment for children with hearing loss to develop communication and language skills that will last a lifetime.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- A multi-state study was launched to evaluate the causes of hearing loss in newborns and young children.
- A prototype database was developed to provide state profiles. All EHDI information will be available to state health departments, other government agencies, parents, and other interested parties.
- A study in Utah was financed to determine the economic costs of screening, follow-up, and diagnosis associated with EHDI programs.
- Funding was provided for a study in Hawaii to evaluate the effectiveness of early identification and intervention in children with hearing loss.
- CDC initiated a study on the accuracy of the two-stage method of screening infants for hearing loss to determine if some infants with mild loss are missed.
- CDC partnered with the Health Resources and Services Administration to fund a multi-state investigation to determine the reasons children do not complete the EHDI process and to develop strategies to reduce this "loss to follow-up."
- CDC funded 30 states to track infants who screen positive for hearing loss to determine if they receive appropriate diagnostic and intervention services.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Continue to work with states to develop a more comprehensive database for monitoring progress on the following national *Healthy People 2010* goals: all infants are to be screened for hearing loss before 1 month of age, preferably before they are discharged from the hospital; infants who screen positive for hearing loss will be referred for an audiological evaluation before 3 months of age; and infants with confirmed hearing loss will be referred for comprehensive medical and intervention services before 6 months of age.
- Move from a prototype to actual usable database for state profiles.
- Continue to conduct and disseminate results from studies into causes of hearing loss and the effectiveness of screening and early intervention programs.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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